

Gained and Lost

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Summary: On a bad day, Wolf finds a friend, only to lose him to the Evil Queen...

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>by Danii
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>Tissue Warning for the Last Part! Not that great, but when inspiration hits, you punch it back for all your worth
Not beta read, and probably full of typos!

>Rating: PG
Summary: Wolf finds a friend in the forest. A familiar friend who he loses later with a great price.

>Feedback: Welcome, good and bad. It means you read it. Please send feedback...
Dedication: To all the people on all the lists. Fandom is what can make or break something, and we've got a crew of makers.

>Gained and Lost by Danii
Wolf cursed in wolfish. Damn his cousin. Damn her and her little red riding hood! Damn her! He was so fed up with that snitty little twit, he wished he could bite her. But, he reflected a moment after, she probably wouldn't taste very good and the repercussions from his aunt would be completely unpleasant.

>Crimson, he growled in his mind, what a name; it's so melodramatic that if I didn't know better, I'd say she'd made it up so as to sound mysterious. And to think, he thought, that little red riding retard would be ruling the 2nd Kingdom someday. Wolf vowed he would leave the 2nd Kingdom on that day.
Goodness knows he tried to avoid her. He'd even convinced his mother to send him to a private school in the 4th Kingdom, along with the rest of his siblings. Little had he known at the time that his Aunt had heard of the school's fine reputation, and sent his cousin as well. And he'd accepted it. He'd learned to deal with it. But then, even when he tried to ignore her, she'd pick on him, or get others to pick on him, which, he admitted, wasn't all that difficult. Most of the boys were jealous of his athletic abilities, not to mention his popularity with the ladies, and the girls who didn't like him would help Crimson in her attempts

to get him in trouble.

>It was her fault he was trudging through the forest. Hers and her friend, Bronze's. They'd framed him for stealing a steak from the school kitchens. His teacher, Professor Aesope, had not been happy, and had kicked him out of class for the day. This day. The day Wolf had been waiting for: the much awaited lesson on the two-door-lying-gatekeeper question. So much for that.
"I probably won't ever have a problem like that anyway" he grumbled, his teacher's story of sour grapes ringing through his brain.

>He continued to mutter and grumble, and he was so lost in his thoughts that, not only did he not hear the person approaching him, but he actually managed to walk right into the gentleman, nearly bowling him over with his inhuman strengthaggravation.

>"Ho, there, young man." the gentleman said after recovering from the blow, "What's your trouble?"
"Sorry, sir...Are you all right?" replied Wolf immediately.

>"I'm fine. It's all right. It's all right, young man." the man chuckled, "You're upset enough as it is, I see. What's troubling you?" He looked genuinely concerned, and his smile looked sincere. He was wearing hunting gear, which looked well worn. His face was older, but not too old, and his eyes had a shine to them that Wolf couldn't help but notice. His hair, which was turning gray, was covered in a floppy old hat, and he carried a small, humble crossbow.
"Oh, nothing sir..." he replied, not wanting to waste the man's time. He looked a bit busy.

>"Nothing my beanstalk!" the man replied, "Something's wrong and I aim to find out what and help you with it!"
"No, it's..." then something dawned on Wolf. "Hey, I don't even know your name!"

>"Nor I yours," the man replied, "William Huntsman, at your service." He did a little bow, his smile the only thing marring the elegant nature of the movement.
"Wolf Hood, at yours" Wolf replied, bowing with a grace unusual in those of his age. He used his mother's name in hopes that the huntsman wouldn't recognize it. A man of the woods would far more likely know the name of a famous wolf than a noble.

>"Wolf, eh?" William replied, peering around behind the young man, "You wouldn't happen to be Scarlet Hood's son?"
"Yes, sir..." Well that didn't work. Here it comes. The whole long and annoying rant about the quality of nobles. He could practically smell it coming. It always did.

>"Oh..." William said, nodding as it sunk in, "I imagine you'll be having a tail then?"
"Indeed, sir..." It came out slowly. Wolf was amazed. No rant. No discussion. Simply acceptance. He felt like howling.

>"Good for running, I imagine" William continued, "You know, keeping your balance while you turn at high speed?"
"Yes sir!" he said with more enthusiasm. "Very good. I couldn't do as well at track and field without it." He couldn't believe it. Someone who actually accepted him. The howl of joy remained in his throat by sheer will power.

>"Ah, an athlete. That's good. That's good." William allowed everything to sink in, then switched the topic back where he wanted it. "So, young Wolf, what seems to be the problem?"
"My cousin, Crimson" Wolf replied, wishing William hadn't brought it up again. He'd been so happy a moment ago.

>"Well, you know what they say, you can pick many things, but you can't pick your family." William said thoughtfully, "I have a sister-in-law who is such a bother. Won't ever eat anything proper. She picks at it. Most bothersome thing in the world. And then she

complains I didn't catch enough! Not to mention the fact that she never even helps to clean up..."
Wolf laughed. The huntsman was grumbling just as he had.

>"Anyway," William continued, "What has this Crimson, whose name, I think, is the silliest piece of melodrama I've ever heard, done?"

"Loads! Farm-fulls! Bundles! Baker's Dozens!" replied Wolf in what was only a few notches down from a howl, "She gets me in trouble all the time, she makes fun of me, she pulls my tail, she gets all the other boys to try to beat me up, she-"

>"I get the idea." interrupted William.
"Indeed. Crimson is making my school life a living he-"

>"Don't be using language like that, my boy. It'll only get you in trouble. Trust me, I know..."
"Sorry, Mr. Huntsman."

>"William."
"William. Anyway, she's the favorite in the family, my mother being a bit of a black sheep and all, though come to think of it, that's a bad analogy considering who she married. I mean, if she was any kind of sheep, my-

>"Yes, son. I understand."
"And I can't exactly bite the future ruler of the 2nd Kingdom..."

>"Well, how about this then..."
And then William explained his most excellent plan.

>*****
"Huh, I really got that lowlife forest trash this time, eh Gretchen?" Crimson laughed, smirking at her success this morning to her friend. She really detested her cousin. He was, in her opinion, a disgrace; a mangy, flea bitten disgrace on the family name that her no-account aunt should have strangled at birth. Crimson was amazed and disgusted by the fact that many girls in her school liked his roguish looks, and often flirted with the mongrel. How disgusting. Crimson had the kind of hate possible only through the knowledge that you shared blood with the target of your loathing.

>Her friend and lackey, Gretchen, laughed quickly, but her laugh was false. It was social suicide not to follow Crimson, and her tastes, but to be perfectly honest, Gretchen really had no great dislike for the half-wolf boy. In fact, she thought he was kind of cute. But she would never say that out loud.
"Yeah, Crim. We got him good this time." Gretchen answered, her voice assuming that slow, I-don't-really-mean-what-I'm-saying-but-you-don't-care-anyway tone which she had honed to perfection in Crimson's company. It's funny, Gretchen reflected, that the only person who can't recognize this tone is the one you use it on. Not, she continued, that Crimson was all that bright. Crimson was the reason why most people in their school never wanted to visit the 2nd Kingdom. She was worse than the wolves. And yet, she remained the most popular girl at school.

>"Well" continued Crimson, walking along to their dorm room, "I think I'll have to chalk this one up as a major success!"
"Yes Crim."

>"And he can't do anything!" Crimson laughed in delight, her red riding boots twitching with her evil joy, "He knows I'm the favorite! I mean, I'm the future ruler of the 2nd Kingdom! He can't exactly bite me! Huh! Mangy fur bag! I showed him who wears the hood in this family!" The princess then gave a tinkling little evil laugh and strutted in front of her friend, grabbing the handle to their dorm room. "I got him!" she shouted in glee as she stepped through the threshold, "And there's nothing he can do about it!"
It was at this moment that the bucket of green dye, which had been strategically placed on the door frame by two particularly devious characters, chose to fall upon the head of the gloating Crimson.

Gretchen, who had luckily been out of the splash range, couldn't contain the giggle the burst forth from her lips, just as the two previously mentioned characters, who were watching from the window, couldn't. The princess and heir to the throne of the 2nd Kingdom stood in shock, her clothing, skin, and hair completely soaked in the powerful green concoction, which both girls ascertained from the bad smell, was beanstalk-derived.

>"I'm going to have him skinned alive..." she muttered heatedly, looking around for something to break.
"No you won't, Crimson," Gretchen said soberly, "He hasn't done any permanent damage, and you can't prove it was him..."

>"What do you mean, I can't prove it!" Crimson screeched, "He...I...well...I...he..that is..."
"You can't do anything just as he can't. You've no proof, and I mean, you can't do anything to him more than you have. Flea bag, or not, he still carries your family name. All you can do is what you have been doing, so he had nothing to lose. And I have a feeling, he will be fighting back now..."

>"Damn Wolf! Damn mongrel! And damn you too, Gretchen! You and you're damn logic!"
"Well, " Gretchen stated calmly, "If you're about done whining, let's see what we can do about the dye..."

>"This sucks elf!"

>They ran. They ran with the carefree joy of revenge without getting caught. It had been easy to set the trap, and even easier to hide near the window and watch. It had worked perfectly. The timing couldn't have worked out better. And her friend had been superb. They'd both heard the conversation, and Gretchen was right. Crimson couldn't do anything! Wolf had to remember to get some nice wildflowers for his cousin's lackey, but for now Wolf let loose a howl of pure joy which set the animals of the forest into a clamor of happiness for him. The huntsman, who now seemed more an old, familiar uncle than a man he had just met in the woods, utilized what vocal range he could in a similar howl of exultation.
They finally stopped in a clearing to get their breath. Wolf was fine, still full of energy, but the half-wolf knew what something sounded like when it needed to stop running, and William needed a rest.

>"That was great, William!" chuckled Wolf, bounding around the clearing, "She'll be green for weeks!"
"Indeed! Very well done! I haven't done anything like that since my marriage!" replied William, who despite his shortness of breath, was still laughing. They continued to laugh until the giddiness left their system and they were left with only joy.

>"Very nice, my boy." praised the huntsman, "Now, I better be going home. It's about suppertime, at least at my house."
"Yeah." replied Wolf, suddenly saddened by the thought of his empty stomach, which looked like it was going to remain that way. His teacher, in light of what had been stolen, had declared he wasn't to have supper that night.

>"I expect you'll be heading back to your school now for your own dinner..."
"Not really."

>"What? They don't feed you at that place?" the huntsman asked, his face full of surprise.
"Not tonight. Teacher's punishment, along with getting kicked out of class for the day. No dinner."

>"Well, since you're such a nice, sweet, intelligent, wonderful young lad, I think I could get my Gytha to set an extra place at the table for you..."
"Really?"

>"Really." said William, his smile lighting up his whole worn face, "Now follow me..."

>The huntsman's cottage was deep in the woods in a small clearing

near some pine trees, whose smell permeated the property in a light, pleasurable way. The house itself wasn't much, simple wood and thatch, but it was large, and obviously cared for and well cleaned by someone who loved it very much. In what could be considered the yard, a large collection of children's toys could be seen. Most were made out of unpainted wood, but a few were decorated with bright, cheery hues that distinguished them from the homemade variety. Off to the side, a small smoking hut could be seen, and Wolf could smell the wonderful scent of the meats hanging there. He began to walk towards it unconsciously, but William gently steered him to the cottage door.

They walked in and were instantly greeted by a slim middle-aged woman in a brown traveling dress. She smiled at William, and took a moment away from her cooking to give him a peck on the cheek. She then returned to her seat by the fire, noticing Wolf as she sat down. "And who is this handsome young man you've brought home, Wil?" she asked, her voice rich, clear, and full of mirth.

>"Oh, this lad's a friend of mine I met today, Gytha" William replied, patting Wolf on the back, "A fine young chap with a good head on his shoulders, I discovered. Gytha, meet Wolf Hood, or do you prefer Greyson?"
Gytha looked a little startled by the name, but kept up a smile. "You'd be Scarlet's son, wouldn't you?"

>"Indeed, madam." replied Wolf, who very much liked the idea of having these two as friends.
"A half-wolf then?" Gytha asked, "But where's your tail?"

>Wolf smiled a bit sheepishly, which is difficult for a wolf, and then reached into the back of his pants and pulled out his tail. Since it was only 3 days till the full moon, his tail was long, and covered with thick, soft, grey fur. He swished it around a couple times to stretch it a bit. While keeping it in his pants helped to avoid a lot of tailpulling and other problems, it throbbed with a pain constantly because of it.
Gytha smiled and ran her hand down the length of his tail, which felt kinda good from Wolf's end of things. His mother had always stroked his tail. It had a calming affect on him. "Very nice" she said at last, patting him on the shoulder, "You have a very nice tail."

>"Thank you ma'am." he replied. Wow. What a wonderful day. While he had gotten in trouble and missed the lesson, he had, because of this, made two new friends who not only accepted him, but liked him. His heart ached with love for these two. He wondered if they would mind if... "Um, would either of you mind if I keep my tail out?" Wolf asked nervously, hoping he hadn't pushed it too far, "It isn't pleasant to keep it there, even if it is necessary..."
Both huntsman and wife looked at the young man. "Of course dear!" they both said at the same time, then Gytha continued "We don't mind it, I like it actually, and if it causes you pain to keep it hidden, I certainly won't be having you do that at my house!" Gytha walked over and hugged him, chuckling at his simple request.

>Gytha then returned and looked to her husband. "What a dear, sweet boy you've brought here, Wil."
Wolf blushed furiously, and William patted him on the back with a laugh. "Oh stop it, Gytha, you'll have him red as a riding hood if you keep up with it."

>Husband and wife laughed, and Wolf laughed along with him. He was very ,very lucky indeed. But in the middle of it, Gytha gasped and shot up. "And you haven't even met our Shawn!" The huntsman's wife then ran out, returning a second later with a young boy who couldn't be more than 6. "Shawn, " Gytha said slowly, "Meet Wolf, a friend of your father's."
"Hello Wolf." the little boy replied, surprisingly articulate, "My name is Shawn. Can you be my friend too?"

>"Sure" replied Wolf, crouching down to meet the youngest member of the family eye to eye, "Would you like to play and get to know me better while your ma makes the dinner?"
The boy smiled, and like his father, it lit up his whole face. "Ya!" The little boy then grabbed Wolf's hand, pulling him with unexpected strength towards the back yard, where Wolf discovered even more toys. And with the joyous fun of having an excuse to play with something you're supposed to be too old for, Wolf began to play with his third new friend.

>In the kitchen, Gytha looked at William straight in the face. "He's a good lad, isn't he?"
"Yes, Gytha. A good lad. I've only known him since this morning, but I know that."

>"It must be hard, being Scarlet's son, not to mention..."

"Indeed," replied William, "It's amazing he isn't a hateful wretch, considering..."

>"He's a good lad, though. He has a lot of love in his heart. I could feel it."
"And so could I, Gytha. That's why I befriended him. He needs a friend. A friend who doesn't bother him because of who and what he is, but simply accepts him. There aren't many people who can do that..."

>"I know, poor boy."
"But he'll find others who can accept him someday..."

>"I certainly hope so."
"As do I Gytha, as do I..."

>*****
From that day forward, Wolf became a common figure in the Huntsman home. He would come often, whenever he was kicked out of class, or had time off from his studies, and learn from William about hunting and tracking, for while Wolf had his advantages, there were still many devious little tricks which were unknown to him. The huntsman taught him well, and within year, William had begun to even pay him for his part in the hunt. Wolf was certainly worth it.

>When he wasn't out hunting with William, he was playing with Shawn, who he taught all the games he knew and played them with the boy constantly. The young Huntsman was smart, and hide-and-go-seek was a difficult game on both ends to win. Wolf taught Shawn many things, including what he was learning in school. Shawn was extremely bright, and took to Wolf's lessons like a fish to water. They were so close, Shawn took to calling Wolf his brother, to which Wolf had no objection.
Wolf also spent a good deal of time with Gytha. His love of food meant he was in her kitchen a lot, and he learned many valuable things in that little cottage cookery. He learned how to cook, to season, to smoke, and how to grow herbs for seasonings. While William thought it silly that a man would be learning to cook, and often brought it up, Gytha's comments concerning her husband's meals before their marriage often silenced the wise huntsman. All in all, Wolf was a happy young boy. This went on for many years, Wolf and the Huntsmans growing very close. But all things must end, and this ended in a particularly unpleasant manner.

>*****
It happened a week after Wolf's graduation. He had told his mother he was staying a few weeks with some friends, so she had no worry for him. He could take care of himself. Wolf would never forget that day, not in a million years. It was a beautiful day, and Wolf and William were in the market place of the local town, a small trading village by the name of Briarston. The entire area was a bustle, for it was announced that the King's new wife, the new Queen, would be coming for a visit. In preparation, all the marketmen were pulling out their finest merchandise, and every man, woman, and child was dressed in their best clothing, all except Wolf and William. They were simply there to buy some herbs for Gytha,

who was running a little low on her favorites of rosemary and garlic. So they were surprised when a highly ornamented carriage stopped in the square.

>A trumpet blared, and steps were placed at the foot of the carriage. Finally, a beautiful lady stepped out of the carriage, her dress and cloak made of dark green fabric of the highest quality. In her hand, one could see a crossbow, it's front made in the image of a bird-of-prey, with ruby eyes that seemed to glow with an evil light. She looked around the square, her eyes beautiful and clear, but calculating nonetheless. At last, she called out in a voice which rang with command.
"This is a magical crossbow. It always hits the heart of a living thing. I will give it to one who asks for it. Who desires this fine crossbow?"

>The townspeople were leery. Magic was a tricky business, and getting something that good would require a great price to the one who received it. There was no such thing as a free lunch, and they knew it. When no one answered, however, the queen began to scan the square. Finally, her eyes rested upon the face of William. She smiled.
Wolf growled deep in his throat, and began to pull his friend away. This wasn't right. This was magic, Wolf knew, bad magic. But William didn't listen. Wolf stood helpless as his best friend brushed him off and stepped closer to the queen.

>"Do you wish to possess this crossbow?" the queen asked, the smile on her face tinged with a hint of something evil.
William looked at his humble bow, then up at the one the queen held in her grasp. He could help his family so much. Just thinking about all the money he could get for Shawn's education and Gytha's new clothes and... They went on and on. With a crossbow that never missed. Why, his business would boom. He had to have it, if only for those he loved.

>"I desire it, my queen." replied William at last, bowing as he did.
"It is yours if you will do one thing for me..." the queen said, holding out the exquisite crossbow, "I want you to shoot it."

>It was an odd request, but one William was glad to oblige. He took the crossbow from the queen's hand. It had an curious feel to it, almost as if it was alive. Magic. William shuddered. He looked to Wolf, and Wolf kept urging him to leave. He knew he should trust the boy. Goodness know, the half-wolf's feelings were never wrong. But something pulled him to this strange tool of the hunt, and he had to obtain it or go mad.
"I'll simply shoot it into the woods" William said gruffly, pushing off Wolf's hand as it tried to grab his own, "Won't hurt nobody in the woods." William walked to the edge of the town, the entire population of Briarston and the queen herself in tow.

>Wolf felt like howling. This wasn't good. This was bad. Very bad. He tried to grab the bizarre crossbow, but William again pushed him away. He screamed and howled at his friend, but for some reason, the old huntsman wasn't listening. And so Wolf watched, just as all the others did. William stood straight, loaded the crossbow with it's special arrows, then pointed it into the woods. As the bow let fly it's missile, Wolf had a vision of Shawn, playing with his toy soldiers in the front yard. Suddenly, the vision was cut as an arrow flew straight into the boy's heart. Wolf looked to William, who had crumpled to the ground.
"Is it true, my friend?" William asked quietly, his eyes brimming with tears at what he hoped was merely a bad daydream.

>Wolf nodded tersely, then turned, unable to look at his best friend. "It was Shawn, Wil. You killed SHAWN!"
The last was a mix of scream and howl. Wolf couldn't help it. It was too heavy a blow, too close to his heart, and far too close to the full moon night. Wolf's eyes turned red, and his teeth turned to fangs. He changed, then

began to howl in earnest, a heart-wrenching sound which seemed to echo through the clear sky like a shriek from the lowest reaches of hell. He howled and howled, frightening the townspeople with his profound grief and anger. His howls seemed to reach into the very spirit of those present, raking their souls through the furnace of his passionate emotions. Along with him, screaming with an insane fervor, was William, who was trying his hardest to destroy the instrument of his son's death. Wolf, brought out of his howls by his friend's screams, lept towards the huntsman, his fury blinding him to the friendship they had once shared. But when he got there, he stopped. His face reverted, and he looked human once more as he reached towards William, who was beating the crossbow into the ground with all his strength.

>"Kill me!" William screeched, "Kill me now! Rip my throat out, if you have any care for me left in your breast, Wolf. Kill me now! I can't live with my son's blood on my hands!"
William was right. What William had done, and was doing to himself, was more than Wolf could ever do to him. Wolf wanted to. He wanted to stop his friend's grief. But he couldn't. He couldn't kill him. They were too close. The old man was Wolf's only true friend. He couldn't do it.

>"I can't, Wil," he replied at last, "I'll be going now..."
"No!" cried the huntsman, "Please!"

>"Good-bye, my friend..." said Wolf quietly, his voice thick with unshed tears.
"NO!"

>But Wolf couldn't hear. He wouldn't hear. He had run off, never to return to this place of pain.
"Come, my Huntsman," said the queen seductively as she walked over to him, "The bow is yours."

>"Yes, my queen" replied the broken man.

*****Years Later*****

>"What are you doing here, young Wolf?"
"William?"

>"No."
"Yes. It's you William. How's Gytha?"

>"Dead."
"Of what?"

>"A crossbow bolt to the heart."
"What the hell?!"

>"I killed her. Her cottage was in my woods, the woods the queen told me were mine to rule."
"But William, she was your WIFE!"

>"I am not William. I am the Huntsman. William was killed years ago."
"No, you're William."

>"No, I'm not. Now get out of my forest."
"William-"

>"I am not William."
"William, I knew you for four years of my life. I'm your friend!"

>"You are no friend of mine. And William is dead. Now get out of my forest."
"What?"

>"All trespassers are poachers. All poachers I will shoot at sight."

"Then why haven't you shot me?"

>"Get out..."
"But-"

>"GET OUT! All you once knew is destroyed! For what once was, I grant you one chance. Do not waste it and do not return. Now GO!"

"William-"

>"Go!"
"But-"

>"GO! And never return, or I will hunt you down like any other, and shoot a bolt through your heart just as I did Shawn."
"I shall never return, William. I promise..."

>"Leave."
And he left. And as the quiet of the woods surrounded the man once called William Huntsman, he finally allowed the tears to fall. It hurt so badly.

>"Good-bye, my friend..."

>Fin
I warned you it was REALLY sad.

>Hoped you liked it though.
Send all feedback and hot wolfies to
HuffPuff1228@yahoo.com

>

> <p><p>

End
file.